

TO THE READER

KINDLY use this book very carefully. If the book is disfigured or marked or written on while in your possession the book will have to be replaced by a new copy or paid for. In case the book be a volume of set of which single volumes are not available the price of the whole set will be realized.

AMARSINGH COLLEGE



Checked

82

Library.

Class No. 821.91

Book No. S 12 S

Acc. No.

198 ✓

(95)



Checked 1981



V. SACKVILLE-WEST : SELECTED POEMS

V. Sackville-West : Poetry

COLLECTED POEMS
KING'S DAUGHTER
SOLITUDE

Com. 05
AL-72 87

SELECTED POEMS

V. SACKVILLE-WEST

The New Hogarth Library
Vol. IV



THE HOGARTH PRESS
37 MECKLENBURGH SQUARE
LONDON, W.C.1

A. S. college

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1941

*Distributed in Canada by our exclusive agent, The Macmillan
Company of Canada Limited, 70 Bond Street, Toronto*

82-1021
5-15-2
acc no 198

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE GARDEN CITY PRESS LTD.,
AT LETCHWORTH, HERTFORDSHIRE

CONTENTS

	PAGE
NOTE	7
SISSINGHURST	9
THE BULL	12
THE OWL	15
*DECEMBER NIGHT	16
ON THE LAKE	21
*WINTER AFTERNOON	23
TO ANY M.F.H.	26
OUT WITH A GUN	28
SOMETIMES WHEN NIGHT	30
SAILING SHIPS	31
EVENING	34
A SAXON SONG	35
FULL MOON	36
MARIANA IN THE NORTH	37
A DREAM	38
STORM IN THE MOUNTAINS	40
PERSIA	42
THE PERSIAN FLUTE	43
THE AQUARIUM, SAN FRANCISCO	44
THE QUARRYMAN (<i>Les Baux</i>)	47

	PAGE
FROM "KING'S DAUGHTER"	
"Which were the strings, musician," . . .	49
"The greater cats with golden eyes" . . .	50
*SEPTEMBER 1939	52
*DIG-DOG	53
*PERSONAL VALOUR—JUNE 1939	56

FROM "THE LAND"	
WINTER	57
FRITILLARIES	59
BEE-MASTER	61
SPRING	65
THE ISLAND	66
SUMMER	68
GARDENER	70
CRAFTSMEN	71
TOWNSPEOPLE	74
AUTUMN	75
VINTAGE	76

NOTE

Most of the poems in this selection are taken from Miss Sackville-West's "Collected Poems" (Hogarth Press, 1933). A few new poems are included, and are marked by an asterisk. Of these, *December Night* and *Winter Afternoon* were first published in the *New Statesman and Nation*; *September 1939* and *Personal Valour* in the *Observer*. Acknowledgments are due to Messrs. William Heinemann, the original publishers of *The Land*, for permission to include certain extracts from that poem.

SISSINGHURST

To V. W.

Thursday

A TIRED swimmer in the waves of time
I throw my hands up : let the surface close :
Sink down through centuries to another clime,
And buried find the castle and the rose.

Buried in time and sleep,
So drowsy, overgrown,
That here the moss is green upon the stone,
And lichen stains the keep.
I've sunk into an image, water-drowned,
Where stirs no wind and penetrates no sound,
Illusive, fragile to a touch, remote,
Foundered within the well of years as deep
As in the waters of a stagnant moat.
Yet in and out of these decaying halls
I move, and not a ripple, not a quiver,
Shakes the reflection though the waters shiver,—
My tread is to the same illusion bound.
Here, tall and damask as a summer flower,
Rise the brick gable and the springing tower ;
Invading Nature crawls
With ivied fingers over rosy walls,
Searching the crevices,
Clasping the mullion, riveting the crack,
Binding the fabric crumbling to attack,
And questing feelers of the wandering fronds
Grove for interstices,
Holding this myth together under-seas,
Anachronistic vagabonds !



And here, by birthright far from present fashion,
As no disturber of the mirrored trance
I move, and to the world above the waters
Wave my incognisance.

For here, where days and years have lost their number,
I let a plummet down in lieu of date,
And lose myself within a slumber
Submerged, elate.

For now the apple ripens, now the hop,
And now the clover, now the barley-crop ;
Spokes bound upon a wheel forever turning,
Wherewith I turn, no present manner learning ;
Bid neither " Speed your processes ! " nor " Stop ! "
I am content to leave the world awry
(Busy with politic perplexity,)
If still the cart-horse at the fall of day,
Clumps up the lane to stable and to hay,
And tired men go home from the immense
Labour and life's expense
That force the harsh recalcitrant waste to yield
Corn and not nettles in the harvest-field.

This husbandry, this castle, and this I
Moving within the deeps,
Shall be content within our timeless spell,
Assembled fragments of an age gone by,
While still the sower sows, the reaper reaps,
And meadows dimple to the village bell.
So plods the stallion up my evening lane

And fills me with a mindless deep repose,
Wherein I find in chain
The castle, and the pasture, and the rose.

Beauty, and use, and beauty once again
Link up my scattered heart, and shape a scheme
Commensurate with a frustrated dream.

The autumn bonfire smokes across the woods
And reddens in the water of the moat ;
As red within the water burns the scythe,
And the moon dwindled to her gibbous tithe
Follows the sunken sun afloat.

Green is the eastern sky and red the west ;
The hop-kilns huddle under pallid hoods ;
The waggon stupid stands with upright shaft,
As daily life accepts the night's arrest.
Night like a deeper sea engulfs the land,
The castle, and the meadows, and the farm ;
Only the baying watch-dog looks for harm,
And shakes his chain towards the lunar brand.
In the high room where tall the shadows tilt
As candle-flames blow crooked in the draught,
The reddened sunset on the panes was spilt,
But now as black as any nomad's tent
The night-time and the night of time have blent
Their darkness, and the waters doubly sleep.
Over my head the years and centuries sweep,
The years of childhood flown,
The centuries unknown ;
I dream ; I do not weep.

1930.

THE BULL

NOW sinks another day to rest
On summer and her leafy ways.
By the last golden light caressed
The farmstead drowns in the haze
Of slanting light in rungs and reins
From heaven slung across the Weald
Above the pricking of the vanes,
More golden than the ripening field
Within the hedgerow squares ensealed.

The owl with short and silent stroke
Deadly to field-fare or to mouse,
Slants from the apple to the oak
Across the orchard near the house ;
And through the grasses creep the small
Creatures of twilight, hid by day ;
The snail beside the garden wall,
The mole on his myopic way.

The kindly trees protective stand
Around the farm less old than they,
And drawl their shadows on a land
Tilled by a man's forgotten hand,
But still beneath his grandson's sway ;
And silent as an empty fane
The barn with doors flung wide
Drinks in the rays of golden rain
On ropes and pulleys, sacks of grain,
A summer evening's pride.

The vanes upon the oasts outside
Have turned their chimneys to the east,
And dim within the shadows deep
Where silence shrouds the roof,
The barn is darkened and asleep.
But in the stall the monstrous beast
Ranges, and stamps a fretful hoof.

The granaries once more are full,
—Oh sweet monotony of the year!—
But in the stall the aging bull
Feels that the end of time is near;
End of that time which was his span,
When he could lash his tail, or browse
On acres all his own,
Or stand four-square and lordly scan
His grass, his calves, his willing cows,
Male, arrogant, alone.
No bachelor! the lord and sire
Of cows and calves in half a shire,
Sole sovereign of his clan;

Whom no man dared approach but he
Who brought the bucket filled with milk
When little bulls are weak of knee
And muzzled sleek as silk;
Days when within a neighbouring byre
His mother softly mourned her loss,
And he already scampered free
In right and callow disregard,

And kicked his heels, and tried to toss
The empty bucket round the yard.

Days of a lost and youthful spring
Before his liberty was scarred
And branded by the shameful ring ;
But what's a ring, when thews are hard
And sex supreme in strength and youth ?
A small and negligible thing !

But now resigned within the shed
He moves uneasy round the stall,
And lowers his great tufted head
Against the manger and the wall ;
Too patient now for mighty rage,
Too mild and cumbrous and uncouth,
He watches night creep on like age,
And only dimly knows the truth.

The night creeps on ; the single star
Of contemplation's lidless eye
Stares through the stable door ajar,
Constant, dispassionate, and high ;
Returning at the punctual hour
To stare on man and beast alike,
On rising strength or fallen power.
Nor merciless, nor pitiful,
Without compassion or dislike ;
And sees the old and lonely bull
Who does not know that he must die.

THE OWL

EACH dusk I saw, while those I loved the most
Chattered of present or of alien things,
The rhythmic owl returning like a ghost
Across the orchard cruising on wide wings.

She went, she came, she swooped, she sought the
height

Where her young brood hid snoring for the mouse ;
Tirelessly weaving on her silent flight
Between the laden branches and the house,

Soft and nocturnal, creamy as a moth ;
But to the timorous small colony
Crouched in the grass, as fatal as a Goth
Ranging the plains in armed panoply.

Such beauty and such cruelty were hers,
Such silent beauty, taloned with a knife ;
Such innocence and fearfulness were theirs,
The little denizens intent on life,

That, terror swooping on my heart's alarm,
I wondered what dire spirit, hushed, adrift,
Might go abroad to do my loves most harm,
Silent and pouncing, ruinous and swift ?

*DECEMBER NIGHT

LISTEN. This winter night when fields are stark,
I lean across the frosty window-sill
To hear the dog-fox bark
Under the window on his prow to kill.
Come, join me, friend ; the night with frost is shrill,
And fox is rare and secret, seldom seen.
Look from the window with me, on the lean
Low form that slips to coops from sandy hill.
Look from the window ; you will seldom see
A wild fox on the errands of his skill.
So, my companion, watch him go, with me.

Soon, all too soon,
His mouth will run with blood, a frothy frill,
Red from some slaughtered fur or tattered quill.
Look from the window : you can see him pass
On slinky pads across the brittle grass.
Each blade stands up to sparkle in the moon,
Hoar with the frost, as bright as splintered glass,
Casting a pencil shadow, tiny mark
Of singularity. The world's a wisp
As fragile as the frozen grass is crisp,
Printed by footsteps that must melt with morn.
Look from the window : all is tranced and still.
The fox goes by, nocturnal visitant.

Let's follow him by trails forlorn,
Tonight, this winter night by pad-prints crossed.
Let's follow him, that miscreant
Slinking between the garden and the thorn.

Come, let us follow on his trail.
He'll lead us to the woods, and there be lost.
So let us lose ourselves, and lose the pale
Radiance of meadows moonlit in the frost ;
Exchange the friendly house for bitter air
And danger of the night with fox to share ;
Exchange the open meadows for the deep
Silent seclusion of the woods asleep.

Asleep ? no, listen, for the wood's awake.
Woods wake while man forgets his ravelled days.
Listen, for woods their midnight secrets keep
And many whispers cross the forest ways
Beneath the beeches, threading through the brake.
Asleep ? oh no, the margin of the lake
Where trees are doubled in a liquid dream
Is animate with restless guests ; the stream
Pouring through stone creates its harmony.
The margin of the lake within the reeds
Is livelier than the meads
Where placid sheep in moonlight rest, and be ;
The lake where sometimes, like a myth, the swan
Descends, and for a day illumines
The water with his Greek voluptuous plumes,
And like a myth by eve again is gone.

The night's not silent, nor's the night asleep.
The night is full of music, rich to creep
Into the hearing heart and pluck a string.
A string of recognition ; solitude
Shared with each fearful, woodland, living thing.

For in the night of terror's reign
When the dread soul's beset by fearful mood,
And soul or body's on a sudden slain,
Our hearts are joint with creatures of the wood.

Listen. Within the night I hear the cry of pain
Well up in darkness in a last appeal.
Some small trapped spirit cries, and cries again,
Tortured by fang or steel.

The ambushed dangers of the wood are wide ;
Come, friend ; we're in the woods ; let's push aside
The branching chestnut and the silver birch,
Let's go to rescue when our help is near.

But that shrill voice, our only guide,
Is stilled in greater terror as our stride
Blunders through undergrowth in search.
Poor foolish victim, taught by fear
To hush the cry when friendly steps approach,
Does unknown peril greater peril spell ?
Would you not risk for present, tasted hell
The unimaginable heaven of release ?

(Yet who are we to utter such reproach ?
Have we not also shrunk beneath the leaves,
And suffered gins to fasten on our flesh,
Rather than seek an easy proffered peace
Which briefly comforts, tenderly deceives ?
Have we not also shrunk from friendship's hand,
And struggled out, alone, afresh,
By suffering informed and newly manned,
To face another maimed and difficult day ?)

Come, friend, my single friend ; come, let us go,
Since we must leave to anguish and to rain
That small and destined body in its pain.

Come, let's regain the narrow ride
Where overhead the stars in bright array
Stud a celestial corridor
With golden nails in heaven's blackened floor.
Come, let us wander down the paths we know,
By pad of foxes trod
And bird-prints crossing on the silver sand,
Towards the riven oak-tree in its pride
Struck by the wrath of God.
Oh, here did anger fall majestic,
Tremendous, when no man was by to see
The murderous lightning threefold split the tree,
The stricken oak centennial
Blanched in the after-years to this dead thing
Laid out superb in death, laid out in state,
Sentinel boughs above it, like a king
Lying in state, unburied, abnegate.

Or let us turn from this accordant death,
Magnificent in ruin though it be ;
Let us return
Towards the living pines that still draw breath
And still renew their sap
Each spring untroubled by the thunder's clap ;
Let us, oh friend, return
Towards the pines that on the crest of hill
Rear naked trunks beneath the moonlight still,
Proud, dark, and taciturn.

The fox is gone to earth with lawless kill ;
What matter ? we have seen
Beauty go by, an outlaw, free ;
Beauty and ruin, secrecy and pain ;
This night we both have been
Linked with the heart of night, a certain gain ;
Never to lose this freedom or this light
Dawning upon us in the deepest night.

Never to lose, and never to forget
Strength of initiation, gravely won,
But through the day's incertitude and fret
To keep this steadfast secret shared with none ;
This transcendental truth of unison
Where we with nature, rarely tuned aright,
Meet at intense, mysterious pitch,
Descending changed by that high symphony,
Changed, different, more rich,
Exalted to a faith in immortality.

ON THE LAKE

A CANDLE lit in darkness of black waters,
A candle set in the drifting prow of a boat,
And every tree to itself a separate shape,
Now plummy, now an arch ; tossed trees
Still and dishevelled ; dishevelled with past growth,
Forgotten storms ; left tufted, tortured, sky-rent,
Even now in stillness ; stillness on the lake,
Black, reflections pooled, black mirror
Pooling a litten candle, taper of fire ;
Pooling the sky, double transparency
Of sky in water, double elements,
Lying like lovers, light above, below ;
Taking, from one another, light ; a gleaming,
A glow reflected, fathoms deep, leagues high,
Two distances meeting at a film of surface
Thin as a membrane, sheet of surface, fine
Smooth steel ; two separates, height and depth,
Able to touch, giving to one another
All their profundity, all their accidents,
—Changeable mood of clouds, permanent stars—
Like thoughts in the mind hanging a long way off,
Revealed between lovers, friends. Peer in the water
Over the boat's edge ; seek the sky's night-heart ;
Are they near, are they far, those clouds, those stars
Given, reflected, pooled ? are they so close
For a hand to clasp them, lift them, feel their shape,
Explore their reality, take a rough possession ?
Oh no ! too delicate, too shy for handling,
They tilt at a touch, quiver to other shapes,

Dance away, change, are lost, drowned, scared ;
Hands break the mirror, speech's crudity
The surmise, the divining ;
Such things so deeply held, so lightly held,
Subtile, imponderable, as stars in water
Or thoughts in another's thoughts.
Are they near, are they far, those stars, that know-
ledge ?
Deep ? shallow ? solid ? rare ? The boat drifts on,
And the litten candle single in the prow,
The small, immediate candle in the prow,
Burns brighter in the water than any star.

*WINTER AFTERNOON

SUMMER may boast her sweets, but sterner days
Strip country bare and gild the nervous trees
With ancient light the summer never knew,
Low and experienced sun, aslant, askew,
Old man of seasons bent on crookèd knees.

(See, on the moat's embankment, like a frieze,
The slow procession leads the punctual hour
Across the primrose of the evening's flower :
Two heifers treading the appointed ways,
Followed by man with stick,
And waddling cygnet and a dozen ducks
Strung out in ludicrous yet due design,
In grave march, never quick,
All homing in their usual evening line.)

Here is no colour, here but gold and ash.
Cold, cold the night will be ; the dusk is chilled
Already with the winter's coiling lash ;
Earth to the moon will blanch.
Yet, rare musician sumptuously skilled,
The sunlight with a sinking finger plucks
Last notes from each bare branch.
Goldsmith of fields already brownly tilled,
Gilder of ridges left behind the plough,
Layer of gold-leaf where no leaf remains
The sunlight in an aged actor's bow
Takes rich and low farewell of summer's strains.

Ah, with what beauty did he touch the trees,
Ah, with what beauty did he touch the fields.
So delicate, so rich, so altering a touch,
It held the heart confuted in a clutch ;
An altering touch that magnified the heart
And set it from the common lines apart.
Such moments come, and shatter prudent shields,
Our poor reminders of mortalities.

(See, up the track come waggons strongly drawn,
Passing the window with their outer life ;
Trusses of fodder, timber newly sawn,
Loads for a sturdy team.
The ruts are frosted, and the horses steam
Snorting with foot-fall effort up the lane ;
The carter's boy alongside leaves the rein,
And pares a hazel switch with sharpened knife.
How calm, how strong, how permanent, how sane,
The venerable necessary theme !)

Is this the world's last day, so placid seem
Earth and her beasts and men and seasons' range ?
So, for a million years, has life worked on
Varied from continent to continent,
From Asia to a patch of little Kent,
A ploughshare carving through the centuries.
Is this the world's last day, that may exchange
Traditions for catastrophes ?
All effort, patient or heroic, gone ?
The little knowledge perilously won
Since men desire, enquire, and still aspire,

Scrapped on a planet's paltry pyre
To perish half-way done ?

Reprieve and ruin, ruin and reprieve.
Still the dread sentence rumbles like a far
Delaying storm above the herded sheep.
So long delaying that the soul takes leave
In reassurance still to disbelieve,
And still to live, and still to sow and reap.
Still rises once again the evening star
In ordered juncture as we, singly blest,
Turn our brave planet to a further rest
And let our hamlets fold themselves in sleep.

TO ANY M.F.H.

SANCTUARY should exist on earth ;
Some private place, where life may be.
Some private place for death and birth,
For boisterous love and puppy mirth
Between the bracken and the tree.

In such a place, a girdled place,
The refuge of the small pursued,
Shall some similitude of grace
Be caught within the fenced embrace
That guards my leafy solitude.

And no white horse or scarlet sleeve
Shall sprinkle down the woodland ride
Where paths between the chestnuts cleave,
And mists the morning stories thief
From men in different mood astride.

In such a place my foxes should
Live free to mate and breed and kill
Within the ambush of my wood,
Scorning the huntsman's hardihood
Hallooing on the stranger's hill.

Though warring men must stain the west
Doubly with sunset's barbarous dye,
Leaving the plumes of manhood's crest,
A shameful yet a proud bequest,
In trails of blood across the sky,

Within the acres that I rule,
The little patch of peace I vaunt,
Where ways are safe and shadows cool,
Shall come no scarlet-coated fool
To tease my foxes from their haunt.

OUT WITH A GUN

. . . **B**UT who would loose a gun tonight ?
The day in silver stillness ends,
And on the lake such peace descends
That swallows in their evening flight
Make music on a level wing.

The trees reflected in the lake
Plunge down to depths that meet the sky ;
The water rests without a sigh,
Though active moorhens leave their wake,
And insects drop a widening ring.

Confident in this hour emerge
The secret lives from brake and bole,
The coot, the leveret, and the vole,
Tranquil to move about the verge
Between the water and the wood.

Christ ! has the world not pain enough
That I should shatter with a shot
—As one who crept with conscious plot,
Evil, malevolent, and rough,—
This innocence of lowlihood ?

Two swallows nest within my house ;
I wake at dawn to see them come ;
And on my floor let fall the crumb
Of harvest for a duffle mouse
Who makes my room his private garth.

Squirrel, take half my nuts ; and you,
Soft leveret, share my springing corn ;
Vixen, deride the hunting-horn ;
Fear but the owl, small pointed shrew ;
And, sweet Saint Francis, haunt my hearth.

SOMETIMES WHEN NIGHT...

SOMETIMES when night has thickened on the
woods,
And we in the house's square security
Read, speak a little, read again,
Read life at second-hand, speak of small things,
Being content and withdrawn for a little hour
From the dangers and fears that are either wholly
absent
Or wholly invading,—sometimes a shot rings out,
Sudden and sharp ; complete. It has no sequel,
No sequel for us, only the sudden crack
Breaking a silence followed by a silence,
Too slight a thing for comment ; slight, and usual,
A shot in the dark, fired by a hand unseen
At a life unknown ; finding, or missing, the mark ?
Bringing death ? bringing hurt ? teaching, perhaps,
escape,
Escape from a present threat, a threat recurrent,
Or ending, once and for all ? But we read on,
Since the shot was not at our hearts, since the mark
was not
Your heart or mine, not this time, my companion.

SAILING SHIPS

L YING on Downs above the wrinkling bay
LI with the kestrels shared the cleanly day,
The candid day ; wind-shaven, brindled turf ;
Tall cliffs ; and long sea-line of marbled surf
From Cornish Lizard to the Kentish Nore
Lipping the bulwarks of the English shore,
While many a lovely ship below sailed by
On unknown errand, kempt and leisurely ;
And after each, oh, after each, my heart
Fled forth, as, watching from the Downs apart,
I shared with ships the joys and fortunes wide
That might befall their beauty and their pride ;

Shared first with them the blessed void repose
Of oily days at sea, when only rose
The porpoise's slow wheel to break the sheen
Of satin water indolently green ;
When for'ard the crew, caps tilted over eyes,
Lay heaped on deck ; slept ; murmured ; smoked ;
threw dice ;
The sleepy summer days ; the summer nights
(The coast pricked out with rings of harbour-lights),
The motionless nights, the vaulted nights of June
When high in cordage drifts th' entangled moon,
And blocks go knocking, and the sheets go slapping,
And lazy swells against the sides come lapping ;
And summer mornings off red Devon rocks,
Faint inland bells at dawn and crowing cocks.

Shared swifter days, when headlands into ken
Trode grandly ; threatened ; and were lost again,
Old fangs along the battlemented coast ;
And followed still my ship, when winds were most
Night-purified, and, lying steeply over,
She fled the wind as flees a girl her lover,
Quickened by that pursuit for which she fretted,
Her temper by the contest proved and whetted ;
Wild stars swept overhead ; her lofty spars
Reared to a ragged heaven sown with stars
As leaping out from narrow English ease
She faced the roll of long Atlantic seas.

Her captain then was I, I was her crew,
The mind that laid her course, the wake she drew,
The waves that rose against her bows, the gales,—
Nay, I was more : I was her very sails
Rounded before the wind, her eager keel,
Her straining mast-heads, her responsive wheel,
Her pennon stiffened like a swallow's wing ;
Yes, I was all her slope and speed and swing.
Whether by yellow lemons and blue sea
She dawdled through the isles off Thessaly,
Or saw the palms like sheaves of scimitars
On desert's verge below the sunset bars,
Or passed the girdle of the planet where
The Southern Cross looks over to the Bear,
And strayed, cool Northerner beneath strange skies,
Flouting the lure of tropic estuaries,
Down that long coast, and saw Magellan's Clouds
arise.

And some that beat up-Channel homeward-bound
I watched, and wondered what they might have found,
What alien ports enriched their teeming hold
With crates of fruit or bars of unwrought gold ?
And thought how London clerks with paper-clips
Had filed the bills of lading of those ships,
Clerks that had never seen the embattled sea,
But wrote down jettison and barratry,
Perils, Adventures, and the Act of God,
Having no vision of such wrath flung broad ;
Wrote down with weary and accustomed pen
The classic dangers of seafaring men ;
And wrote " Restraint of Princes," and " the Acts
Of the King's Enemies," as vacant facts,
Blind to the ambushed seas, the encircling roar
Of angry nations foaming into war.

EVENING

WHEN little lights in little ports come out,
Quivering down through water with the stars,
And all the fishing fleet of slender spars
Range at their moorings, veer with tide about ;

When race of wind is stilled and sails are furled,
And underneath our single riding-light
The curve of black-ribbed deck gleams palely white,
And slumbrous waters pool a slumbrous world,

—Then, and then only, have I thought how sweet
Old age might sink upon a windy youth,
Quiet beneath the riding-light of truth,
Weathered through storms, and gracious in retreat.

A SAXON SONG

TOOLS with the comely names,
Mattock and scythe and spade,
Couth and bitter as flames,
Clean, and bowed in the blade,—
A man and his tools make a man and his trade.

Breadth of the English shires,
Hummock and kame and mead,
Tang of the reeking byres,
Land of the English breed,—
A man and his land make a man and his creed.

Leisurely flocks and herds,
Cool-eyed cattle that come
Mildly to wonted words,
Swine that in orchards roam,—
A man and his beasts make a man and his home.

Children sturdy and flaxen
Shouting in brotherly strife,
Like the land they are Saxon,
Sons of a man and his wife,—
For a man and his loves make a man and his life.

FULL MOON

SHE was wearing the coral taffeta trousers
Someone had brought her from Isfahan,
And the little gold coat with pomegranate blossoms,
And the coral-hafted feather fan ;
But she ran down a Kentish lane in the moonlight,
And skipped in the pool of the moon as she ran.

She cared not a rap for all the big planets,
For Betelgeuse or Aldebaran,
And all the big planets cared nothing for her,
That small impertinent charlatan,
As she climbed on a Kentish stile in the moonlight,
And laughed at the sky through the sticks of her fan.

MARIANA IN THE NORTH

ALL her youth is gone, her beautiful youth outworn,
Daughter of tarn and tor, the moors that were
once her home
No longer know her step on the upland tracks forlorn
Where she was wont to roam.

All her hounds are dead, her beautiful hounds are
dead,
That paced beside the hoofs of her high and nimble
horse,
Or streaked in lean pursuit of the tawny hare that fled
Out of the yellow gorse.

All her lovers have passed, her beautiful lovers have
passed,
The young and eager men that fought for her arro-
gant hand,
And the only voice which endures to mourn for her
at the last
Is the voice of the lonely land.

A DREAM

DOWN the long path beneath the garden wall,
She stooped, setting her plants in the winter dusk.
She knew she must make an end of setting her plants,
Though why she must make an end she nothing knew.
Was it the end of the year that made her urgent ?
Was it the end of the day ? for night came down,
And the heavy sky grew black above the wall,
And the trees were quiet in a stillness worse than
storm

As the great white stealthy flakes began to fall,
But still she stooped with her trowel, setting her
plants.

And the ground grew white with the imperceptible
drift

Of the silent snow from a black and loaded heaven,
And candles came around her, stuck in silver ;
Candelabra of silver, with horns of flame,
Burning the snow to a ruddy glow as she set
The fragile year's-end plants of her dying hopes.

But the candles failed to mount with the mounting
snow ;

The silver bases and then the silver stems
Were buried under the drift, and the drift invaded
The very candles and stems of tender wax,
So that the flames alone remained above the snow,
But the flames persisted, travelling as she travelled,

And the snow touched them not, nor melted they
the snow.

Then came the fallow deer with delicate hoof,
Printing their steps around her as she stooped,
And their antlers burned with little flames at the tip,
Little daggers of gold at every point,
Pricket and sorel and buck, and the doe with her
fawn.

And she knew that she neared the end of the garden
path,
And the deer and the buried candles travelled with
her,
But still she knew that she would not make an end
Of setting her plants before the shroud came round
her.

STORM IN THE MOUNTAINS. (SAVOY)

For Hilda Matheson

THE rags of storm are on the hills ;
The gathering dusk is shot with light ;
One peak is dark, another bright,
And every vein of valley fills
With wind as on an errand sent :
The thunder bruises through the clouds,
And spears of lightning tear the shrouds
Behind the mountains' tattered tent,
But distant still the muted storm
Waiting, like anger, for the spark,
Delays in masses bright and dark,
And drapes with threat the ranges' form,
Yet will not break. Those slatted beams
Stand upright from the mountains' flanks
As laddered for celestial ranks
In tall and misty golden gleams.
Enormous stage, with curtains hung
Of mournful purple in the deeps,
And midnight blue upon the steeps
From ropes of slanting sunlight slung,
And solitude that empty holds
The scarp, the crag, the valleys' cleft,
As though no son of man were left
To stride between the curtains' folds.

The butterflies that fanned the stone
With azure or with speckled wing

Are fled before the shadowing ;
A few last fugitives are blown
About the upland meadow's slope
In wild and windy path too frail
To choose a way before the gale,
But still held up on gusty hope,
Unlike the lowly, rooted flowers
That tethered to their fate remain,
Among the grass a painted stain
In sunny or in savage hours,
Such hours as they, familiar, knew
Since first upon a shaping world
The veils of such a storm were furled,
And peaks rose up, and gentians grew.

PERSIA

THE passes are blocked by snow.

No word comes through, no message, and no letter.

Only the eagles plane above the snow,

And wolves come down upon the villages.

The barrier of mountains is the end,

The edge of the world to us in wintry Persia.

We are self-contained, shut off.

Only the telegraph ticks out its flimsy sheets,

Bringing the distant news of deaths of princes.

Day after day the cold and marvellous sun

Rides in the cold, the pale, the marvellous heaven,

Cutting the blue and icy folds of shadow

Aslant the foot-hills where the snow begins.

So would I have it, pure in isolation,

With scarcely a rumour of the varied world

Leaping the mountain-barrier in disturbance.

Are there not hearts that find their high fulfilment

Alone, with ice between them and their friends ?

THE PERSIAN FLUTE

A PERSIAN shepherd by a waterfall
Piping to please himself among his goats,
Gave me this flute, that now upon my wall
Hangs, hollow exile, prisoning its notes.

Its heart is broken ; silent are its strains.
I cannot wake the little Persian flute.
It does not, will not, know me ; it remains
Beneath my fingers obstinately mute.

Yet this slim reed, when stars were overhead,
And dusk was vocal with the bleating flocks,
Sent up its pure and melancholy thread
Of music by the river and the rocks.

I thought that I should wake that note again
With one clear echo of the hills apart,
Summoning Asia to an English lane,—
I had not reckoned with a broken heart.

Shall we go back together, my flute and I,
To find again the shepherd of Shalil,
And when the planet Venus travels high
Above the myrtle grove of Murdafil,

Make each our separate music ? For I too
Am silent sometimes, thinking of those stars,
That solitude, those evenings waning blue,
And the lost beauty of the plains of Fars.

THE AQUARIUM, SAN FRANCISCO

MANY a curious mortal have I seen,
Some bald, some hairy, dwarfish, tall, fat, lean ;
And some who sought for gold, and some who sought
At second-hand for other people's thought,
And some who sought for nothing on this earth
But how to pass the time twixt death and birth,
And many with their passions and their pranks,
But none so strange as these who came in tanks
From some Pacific atoll of the main
To swim behind a milky opal pane,
Stared at, but never staring back again.

Stretch your imagination to assent
To these conceits that Nature did invent ;
Extravagant and freakish holiday
When on an impulse tropical and gay
(Shaking herself from obligation free,)
Nature upset her paint-box in the sea.
A sudden fling of wit, a giddy quirk,
A respite from the solemn serious work
Of making pink, unornamental men,
Forbears of banker and of citizen.

Within that wet, that other element
Sufficient to itself, as different
From sapient life as dream-deluded sleep,
(Life in a prism, luminously deep,)
Content to Be, without a question why,
With gaping gill and lidless open eye,

With frolic fin by waving streamers draped,
Thin as a coin, fantastically shaped,
Fresh as a toy, and sinuous as an imp,
Tiny and exquisite beyond the scrimp
Imagination of a human poet
Who can't devise a thing unless he know it
Already fixed and ready to his pen,
A docketed and handy specimen,
These fish, I say, though fish sound bloodless, cold,
With unreality all rigmaroled,
Now striped, now stippled, speckled, shot, and
starred,
Pied, painted, dappled, boneless, brindled, barred,
Slim, thoughtless, free and finite, water-wise,
Single and speechless though in shoals they rise
Within the prisoned freedom of the glass,
Between the coral and the reeds they pass.

And some, less arrowy and less gymnastic,
But in their lethargy no less fantastic,
Stalk-eyed and mailed, malevolently slow
As some antennaed, armed daimio,
Crawl horny on the floor of silver-sand,
And to defend their corner of that strand
Fight with stiff joints and chelate nipper claws
Against the slow transgressor of their laws.
And some, less sinister and much less big,
—Sea-horses, looped and pensive on a sprig,
Mindful of currents that will never come
Here in their tank to bear them far from home,—
With still philosophy accept their lot,

Submissive victims of a human plot ;
A plot to frame them all within a square
Neatly supplied with bubbles of fresh air.

Was it for this that Nature lost her wish
To make a man, and made, instead, a fish ?

THE QUARRYMAN (*LES BAUX*)

SURLY, the generations sent him out,
Climbing a path as stony as his life,
Through valleys aromatic in the drought
With thyme and lavender among the boulders ;
The fierce sun dried his shirt upon his shoulders,
And in his pocket warmed the clasped knife.

But in the quarries underneath the hill
The shadow bent its knee across the portal ;
The sun died instantly in sudden chill,
And in the catacombs of tunnelled stone
The candid chips lay strewn as fleshless bone,
And candid shelves awaited urns immortal.

He dumped his saw, his mattock, and his pick ;
He dumped his bundle on a handy ledge ;
And then by his prepared arithmetic
Spat on his palms and fell to work begun
On similar mornings when the thwarted sun
Into the shadowed pylon drove its wedge.

He laboured, never raising eye from line ;
One block completed cost him twenty days ;
He gave his life to an unseen design,
Sculptor of mountains while he thought to carve
A living, that his children should not starve,
And with the sunset clattered down his ways.

He laboured at his subterranean craft,
Not seeing that the white, square temple rose,
Roofed over by a mountain, apse and shaft
Deep-driven, pillared into ivory halls,
Luminous galleries and virgin walls,
Unfinished altars, white as drifted snows.

Through the soft limestone hissed the rhythmic saw ;
The stone was hard without, but soft within,
As he, whose hard exterior hid the flaw
Of softness prey to ignorance and doubt ;
How grey, how beaten by the years without,
How white, how tender when the tests begin !

New shapes, new planes, undreamed by architect ;
An accidental beauty, born of need ;
Beauty of angles, vertical, erect,
And monolithic as a sea-cut cave
Where the withdrawal of the millionth wave
Leaves the smooth surface when the tides recede.

To what new god he left it dedicate,
This straight new temple lit by crooked day,
The smokeless altars, and the height elate,
The slabs for sacrifice, the mounting stairs,
The naves and transepts risen unawares,
The sunlight and the shadow, who shall say ?

FROM *KING'S DAUGHTER*

VIII

WHICH were the strings, musician,
That showed thee Paradise ?
Which was the coast, O mariner,
That filled thy sails with spice ?
Which were the stars, O shepherd,
That strewed thy lonely skies ?

Her spirit is the violin
Whereon my hands in secret play ;
The breezes off a low Cathay
Have scooped my sails to scented caves,
And danced my barque upon the waves,
And chased me on a gale of musk ;
A constellation all unknown
Has slung its coins upon the dusk,
And stabbed its sign for me alone.

Keep thy straight strings, musician !
And, shepherd, watch thy stars.
She's more to me than Jupiter,
Or Mercury and Mars.
Make landfall, master-mariner,
Where anchors hook in gold ;
Mine is the earliest melody,
The haven, and the fold.

THE greater cats with golden eyes
 Stare out between the bars.
 Deserts are there, and different skies,
 And night with different stars.
 They prowl the aromatic hill,
 And mate as fiercely as they kill,
 And hold the freedom of their will
 To roam, to live, to drink their fill ;
 But this beyond their wit know I :
 Man loves a little, and for long shall die.

Their kind across the desert range
 Where tulips spring from stones,
 Not knowing they will suffer change,
 Or vultures pick their bones.
 Their strength's eternal in their sight,
 They rule the terror of the night,
 They overtake the deer in flight,
 And in their arrogance they smite ;
 But I am sage, though they are strong :
 Man's love is transient as his death is long.

Yet oh what powers to deceive !
 My wit is turned to faith,
 And at this moment I believe
 In love, and scout at death.
 I came from nowhere, and shall be
 Strong, steadfast, swift, eternally :

I am a lion, a stone, a tree,
And as the Polar star in me
Is fixed my constant heart on thee.
Ah, may I stay forever blind
With lions, tigers, leopards, and their kind.

*SEPTEMBER 1939

SICK to our souls we dumbly wait
As though some wild disordered star
Broke from its place, and from afar
Rushed downward like a streak of fate.

Nothing remains but active faith
And courage of a high despair,
In moments when we grow aware
Of noble death that is not death.

*DIG-DOG

SUMMONED by bleatings of an errant flock
I left my room and took the leafy way
Down to the meadow and the irises

Where sheep had gone astray.
The night was quiet and the stars were mild,
Dozing as gentle as a drowsy child
Or as a woman satisfied with love.

The dew had drenched the grasses while the clock
Latened the hour and silenced noise of day.
Venus hung large and golden in the west,
Earth's visitant and contemplative guest ;
The sunset rimmed a bowl round half the sky ;
The nestlings in the hedges were asleep.

I sought the silly sheep.

Then in a dream, as I pursued the last
Lost lamb in that calm night,
I caught a vision of my ancient homes
In future and the past.

I saw the past : the proud, the lordly porch,
The courtyards and the windows glinting bright,
And in that dream of Tudor mastery
The planet in the west became a torch.

I saw them both, my homes of threatened Kent,
Two houses mixed within my adult mind :
The grey walls of my childhood, noble Knole ;
Then rosy walls I rescued from decay,

My broken castle and my moated keep
Heavy with roses and my saddened soul.

I saw them both in vision as I went
To save the lost lamb and the dismal sheep.

I heard in memory the galloping
Of fallow deer, small hooves on boarded way.

A frightened clattering
Of small wild creatures scared by me a child,
Scared as myself and as myself so wild.
And this means youth to me, that scattering
Of tiny hooves of deer
Rattling along a passage small and hard
Between the Queen's Court and the Stable Yard,
A drift of fancy and a drift of fear.

Why should I write these things ? Because these things
Are what they mean to commoners and kings.

They're home ; they're dreams ; they're childhood
and the rest
Of lost remembered moments torn to light.
One home, one dream. For me the fallow deer,
The crumbling walls, the swans in morning flight,
The sheep escaping through an opened gate,
And all a tiny unimportant fate.

Now that we're shut against the world I see
Our northern island obstinately strong,
Small, proud, rough, tough,

Where women, arms akimbo, dare the raids
In villages with poor possessions broken
And all the records of their lives a token,
And courage stands alone, and is enough.

But above all I see

A cottage standing in a lane not wide,
Oddly called Dig-dog, where a man might go,
A country-lover bringing country-bride.
Here might he lie and drink against her breast
The milk provided for their country-son.
Here might he find a temporary rest
For his unquiet mind.

Deep draughts of comfort from a peasant-breast,—
Gentle she is, and mild ;
Her flesh is satin and her breast is silk,
Soft to the lips of lover or of child,
Rich as a fresh-calved udder full of milk.

Dig-dog ! dig-dog ! dig-dog ! like bells it chimes,
And in my heart in these uneasy times
Echoes the patient curfew of its knell,
A quiet cattle-bell.

Dig-dog. I see great lavender
Shutting-in hedges, greater love within.
Thus always grew the cottage and its heart.

So let love grow and English lanes remain,
Anna of Dig-dog takes her country part,

*PERSONAL VALOUR—JUNE 1939

IF once we feared that Fear itself might come,
A lodger with a retinue of slaves
(Despair, misgiving, doubt, and other knaves)
To make within our soul their shameful home,
Like some dishonourable malady
Concealed from all but our own private knowing,
Our one concern that there should be no showing
Of fear of Fear, that worst worm enemy,

—Now that our danger rises like the sun,
Chasing all thin confusing mists away,
How fine, how proud, our wings of courage sweep

Clear as a sea-gull for each separate one,
Ranging ourselves above our island spray
Around the bastions of our lonely keep.

FROM THE LAND

WINTER

I SING the cycle of my country's year,
I sing the tillage, and the reaping sing,
Classic monotony, that modes and wars
Leave undisturbed, unbettered, for their best
Was born immediate, of expediency.
The sickle sought no art ; the axe, the share
Draped no superfluous beauty round their steel ;
The scythe desired no music for her stroke,
Her stroke sufficed in music, as her blade
Laid low the swathes ; the scythesmen swept, nor
cared

What crop had ripened, whether oats in Greece
Or oats in Kent ; the shepherd on the ridge
Like his Boeotian forebear kept his flocks,
And still their outlines on our tenderer sky
Simple and classic rear their grave design
As once at Thebes, as once in Lombardy.

I sing once more
The mild continuous epic of the soil,
Haysel and harvest, tilth and husbandry ;
I tell of marl and dung, and of the means
That break the unkindly spirit of the clay ;
I tell the things I know, the things I knew
Before I knew them, immemorially ;
And as the fieldsman of unhurrying tread
Trudges with steady and unchanging gait,

Being born to clays that in the winter hold,
So my pedestrian measure gravely plods,
Telling a loutish life. I have refused
The easier uses of made poetry,
But no small ploy disdain to chronicle,
And (like that pious yeoman laid to rest
Beneath the legend that told all his life
In five hard words : " He tilled the soil well ")
Prune my ambition to the lowly prayer
That I may drive the furrow of my tale
Straight, through the lives and dignities I know.

From *The Land*.

FRITILLARIES

ONCE I went through the lanes, over the sharp
Tilt of the little bridges ; past the forge,
And heard the clang of anvil and of iron,
And saw the founting sparks in the dusky forge,
And men outside with horses, gossiping.
So I came through that April England, moist
And green in its lush fields between the willows,
Foaming with cherry in the woods, and pale
With clouds of lady's-smock along the hedge
Until I came to a gate and left the road
For the gentle fields that enticed me, by the farms,
Wandering through the embroidered fields, each one
So like its fellow ; wandered through the gaps,
Past the mild cattle knee-deep in the brooks,
And wandered drowsing as the meadows drowsed
Under the pale wide heaven and slow clouds.
And then I came to a field where the springing grass
Was dulled by the hanging cups of fritillaries,
Sullen and foreign-looking, the snaky flower,
Scarfed in dull purple, like Egyptian girls
Camping among the furze, staining the waste
With foreign colour, sulky, dark, and quaint,
Dangerous too, as a girl might sidle up,
An Egyptian girl, with an ancient snaring spell,
Throwing a net, soft round the limbs and heart,
Captivity soft and abhorrent, a close-meshed net,
—See the square web on the murrey flesh of the
flower—
Holding her captive close with her bare brown arms.

Close to her little breast beneath the silk,
A gypsy Judith, witch of a ragged tent,
And I shrank from the English field of fritillaries
Before it should be too late, before I forgot
The cherry white in the woods, and the curdled clouds,
And the lapwings crying free above the plough.

From *The Land*.

BEE-MASTER

I HAVE known honey from the Syrian hills
Stored in cool jars ; the wild acacia there
On the rough terrace where the locust shrills,
Tosses her spindrift to the ringing air ;
Narcissus bares his nectarous perianth
In white and golden tabard to the sun,
And while the workers rob the amaranth
Or scarlet windflower low among the stone
Intent upon their crops,
The Syrian queens mate in the high hot day,
Rapt visionaries of creative fray.
Soaring from fecund ecstasy alone,
While through the blazing ether, drops
Like a small thunderbolt the vindicated drone.

I have known bees within the ruined arch
Of Akbar's crimson city hang their comb ;
Swarm in forsaken courts in a sultry March,
Where the mild ring-doves croon, and small apes
 play,
And the thin mangy jackal makes his home ;
And where, the red walls kindling in the flares,
Once the great Moghul lolling on his throne,
Between his languid fingers crumbling spice,
Ordered his women to the chequered squares,
And moved them at the hazard of the dice.

But this is the bee-master's reckoning
In England. Walk among the hives and hear.

Forget not bees in winter, though they sleep,
For winter's big with summer in her womb,
And when you plant your rose-trees, plant them deep,
Having regard to bushes all aflame,
And see the dusky promise of their bloom,
In small red shoots, and let each redolent name—
Tuscany, Crested Cabbage, Cottage Maid—
Load with full June November's dank repose ;
See the kind cattle drowsing in the shade,
And hear the bee about his amorous trade,
Brown in the gipsy crimson of the rose.

In February, if the days be clear,
The waking bee, still drowsy on the wing,
Will guess the opening of another year
And blunder out to seek another spring.
Crashing through winter sunlight's pallid gold,
His clumsiness sets catkins on the willow
Shaking like lambs' tails in the early fold,
Dusting with pollen all his brown and yellow,
But when the rimy afternoon turns cold
And undern squalls buffet the chilly fellow,
He'll seek the hive's warm waxen welcoming
And set about the chambers' classic mould.

And then pell-mell his harvest follows swift,
Blossom and borage, lime and balm and clover,
On Downs the thyme, on cliffs the scantling thrift,
Everywhere bees go racing with the hours,
For every bee becomes a drunken lover,
Standing upon his head to sup the flowers.

All over England, from Northumbrian coasts,
To the wild sea-pink blown on Devon rocks,
Over the merry southern gardens, over
The grey-green bean-fields, round the Kentish oasts,
Through the frilled spires of cottage hollyhocks,
Go the big brown fat bees, and wander in
Where dusty spears of sunlight cleave the barn,
And seek the sun again, and storm the whin,
And in the warm meridian solitude
Hum in the heather round the moorland tarn.

Look, too, when summer hatches out the brood,
In tardy May or early June,
And the young queens are strong in the cocoon,
Watch, if the days be warm,
The flitting of the swarm.

Follow, for if beyond your sight they stray,
Your bees are lost, and you must take your way
Homeward disconsolate ; but be at hand
And you may take your bees on strangers' land.
Have your skep ready, drowse them with your smoke ;
Whether they cluster on the handy bough
Or in the difficult hedge, be nimble now,
For bees are captious folk
And quick to turn against the lubber's touch,
But if you shake them to their wicker hutch
Firmly, and turn towards the hive your skep,
Into the hive the clustered thousands stream,
Mounting the little slatted sloping step,
A ready colony, queen, workers, drones,

Patient to build again the waxen thrones
For younger queens, and all the chambered cells
For lesser brood, and all the immemorial scheme.

And still they labour, though the hand of man
Inscrutable and ravaging descend,
Pillaging in their citadels,
Defeating wantonly their provident plan,
Making a havoc of their patient hoard ;
Still silly bees, not knowing to what end,
Not knowing to what ultimate reward
Or what new ruin of the garnered hive
The senseless god in man will send,
Still in blind stupid industry will strive,
Constructing for destruction pitiably,
That still their unintelligible lord
May reap his wealth from their calamity.

From *The Land*.

SPRING

THERE were so many days that I was given.
But whether of this spring or that ? they merge
As travelling clouds across my permanent heaven.

My life was rich ; I took a swarm of bees
And found a crumpled snake-skin on the road,
All in one day, and was increased by these.

I have not understood humanity.
But those plain things, that gospel of each year,
Made me the scholar of simplicity.

*This once I saw, but not again,
Above the water pocked by rain :
Three mottled eggs in a moorhen's nest,
In a clump of kingcups by the edge
Of the water, in amongst the sedge ;
The rain was but an April shower ;
The kingcup but a minted flower,
Cup of a king in gold.
Was there not once a king who sought him
The perfect chalice, and bethought him
The breast of Helen for his mould ?
A wild bird's nest and Helen's breast,
What lovely things that spring did hold!*

From *The Land*.

THE ISLAND

SHE walks among the loveliness she made,
Between the apple-blossom and the water—
She walks among the patterned pied brocade,
Each flower her son, and every tree her daughter.
This is an island all with flowers inlaid,
A square of grassy pavement tessellated ;
Flowers in their order blowing as she bade,
And in their company by her created.
The waving grasses freckle sun with shade,
The wind-blown waters round the kingcups ripple,
Colour on colour chequered and arrayed,
Shadow on light in variable stipple.
Her regiments at her command parade,
Foot-soldier primrose in his rank comes trooping,
Then wind-flowers in a scarlet loose brigade,
Fritillary with dusky orchis grouping.
They are the Cossacks, dim in ambushade,
Scarfed in their purple like a foreign stranger,
Piratical, and apt for stealthy raid,
Wherever's mystery or doubtful danger.
Iris salutes her with his broad green blade,
And marches by with proud imperial pennant,
And tulips in a flying cavalcade
Follow valerian for their lieutenant.
The Lords-and-Ladies dressed for masquerade
In green silk domino discreetly hooded,
Hurry towards the nut-trees' colonnade,
Philandering where privacy's well wooded ;
They're the civilians of this bold crusade,

The courtiers of this camp by blossom tented,
With woodbine clambering the balustrade,
And all by briar roses battlemented.
There, in the sunlit grasses green as jade,
She walks ; she sees her squadrons at attention,
And, laughing at her flowery escapade,
Stretches her hands towards her dear invention.

From *The Land*.

SUMMER

NOW be you thankful, who in England dwell,
That to the starving trees and thirsty grass
Even at summer's height come cloudy fleets
Moist from the wastes of the Atlantic swell,
To spill their rain, and pass,
While fields renew their sweets.
Not as the Arab watches in despair
The scannel promise of his harvest parch
Even before the sun climbs high in March
And only dust-motes dim the scorching air.
He who must yoke to wooden water-wheel
The bullock or the camel, turning slow
But constant in the round and trodden groove,
Slumberous as hypnotics move,
To the lamentation of the whining cogs,
While in the runnels rapid waters flow,
Lapped by the timid tongue of pariah dogs,
And in the trenches spread, to quench and heal;
Or as the Median from his hills of snow
Gathers the freshet to the jealous pool,
And floods his garden with a hundred streams
Under the plane-trees when the evening's cool,
But still for all his pains
Sees roses languish with returning noon,
And in the heat of June
The leaves already flutter from the planes.

Such arid months as only exiles know,
With longing for the smell of English rains,

Some drops to lay the dust, some shower to stir
The earthy redolence of soaking loam,
Some saddening of the sky before the shower,
Some dew to hold a footprint for an hour ;
When through the stones the lizard and the snake
Rustle their brittle length, and crickets chirr
Day after day, and broom-pods crackling break,
Scavenger kites hang waiting for the dead
Over the old and solitary ram,
And the mule picks his way up the dried river-bed,—
This know, and know then how the heart can ache
With pining for the woods and clouds of home.

If I could take my England, and could wring
One living moment from her simple year,
One moment only, whether of place or time,
—One winter coppice feathery with rime,
One shred of dawn in spring,—
Then should my voice find echo in English ear ;
Then might I say, “ That which I love, I am.”

From *The Land*.

GARDENER

GARDENER, let your spud be sharp to ridge
The loam from spiny hedge to hedge ;
Labour within your garden square
Till back be broke and light grow rare,
But never heed the sinews' pain
If you may snatch before the rain
Crisp days when clods will turn up rough ;
Gentleman robin brown as snuff
With spindle legs and bright round eye
Shall be your autumn company.
Trench deep ; dig in the rotting weeds ;
Slash down the thistle's greybeard seeds ;
Then make the frost your servant ; make
His million fingers pry and break
The clods by glittering midnight stealth
Into the necessary tilth.
Then may you shoulder spade and hoe,
And heavy-booted homeward go,
For no new flowers shall be born
Save hellebore on Christmas morn,
And bare gold jasmine on the wall,
And violets, and soon the small
Blue netted iris, like a cry
Startling the sloth of February.

From The Land.

CRAFTSMEN

ALL craftsmen share a knowledge. They have held
Reality down fluttering to a bench ;
Cut wood to their own purposes ; compelled
The growth of pattern with the patient shuttle ;
Drained acres to a trench.
Control is theirs. They have ignored the subtle
Release of spirit from the jail of shape.
They have been concerned with prison, not escape ;
Pinioned the fact, and let the rest go free,
And out of need made inadvertent art.
All things designed to play a faithful part
Build up their plain particular poetry.
Tools have their own integrity ;
The sneath of scythe curves rightly to the hand,
The hammer knows its balance, knife its edge,
All tools inevitably planned,
Stout friends, with pledge
Of service ; with their crotchets too
That masters understand,
And proper character, and separate heart,
But always to their chosen temper true.
—So language, smithied at the common fire,
Grew to its use ; as sneath and shank and haft
Of well-grained wood, nice instruments of craft,
Curve to the simple mould the hands require,
Born of the needs of man.
The poet like the artisan
Works lonely with his tools ; picks up each one,
Blunt mallet knowing, and the quick thin blade,

And plane that travels when the hewing's done ;
Rejects, and chooses ; scores a fresh faint line ;
Sharpens, intent upon his chiselling ;
Bends lower to examine his design,
If it be truly made,
And brings perfection to so slight a thing.
But in the shadows of his working-place,
Dust-moted, dim,
Among the chips and lumber of his trade,
Lifts never his bowed head, a breathing-space
To look upon the world beyond the sill,
The world framed small, in distance, for to him
The world and all its weight are in his will.
Yet in the ecstasy of his rapt mood
There's no retreat his spirit cannot fill,
No distant leagues, no present, and no past,
No essence that his need may not distil,
All pressed into his service, but he knows
Only the immediate care, if that be good ;
The little focus that his words enclose ;
As the poor joiner, working at his wood,
Knew not the tree from which the planks were taken,
Knew not the glade from which the trunk was
brought,
Knew not the soil in which the roots were fast,
Nor by what centuries of gales the boughs were
shaken,
But holds them all beneath his hands at last.

Much goes to little making,—law and skill,
Tradition's usage, each man's separate gift ;

Till the slow worker sees that he has wrought
More than he knew of builded truth
As one who slips through years of youth
Leaving his young indignant rage,
And finds the years' insensible drift
Brings him achievement with the truce of age.

From *The Land*.

TOWNSPEOPLE

BOOK-LEARNING they have known.
They meet together, talk, and grow most wise,
But they have lost, in losing solitude,
Something,—an inward grace, the seeing eyes,
The power of being alone ;
The power of being alone with earth and skies,
Of going about a task with quietude,
Aware at once of earth's surrounding mood
And of an insect crawling on a stone.

From *The Land*.

AUTUMN

NOW I have told the year from dawn to dusk,
Its morning and its evening and its noon ;
Once round the sun our slanting orbit rolled,
Four times the seasons changed, thirteen the moon ;
Corn grew from seed to husk,
The young spring grass to fodder for the herds ;
Drought came, and earth was grateful for the rain ;
The bees streamed in and out the summer hives ;
Birds wildly sang ; were silent ; birds
With summer's passing fitfully sang again ;
The loaded waggon crossed the field ; the sea
Spread her great generous pasture as a robe
Whereon the slow ships, circling statelily,
Are patterned round the globe.
The ample busyness of life went by,
All the full busyness of lives
Unknown to fame, made lovely by no words :
The shepherd lonely in the winter fold ;
The tiller following the eternal plough
Beneath a stormy or a gentle sky ;
The sower with his gesture like a gift
Walking the furrowed hill from base to brow ;
The reaper in the piety of thrift
Binding the sheaf against his slanted thigh.

From *The Land*.

VINTAGE

YET I recall
Another harvest, not beneath this sky
So Saxon-fair, so washed by dew and rain ;
Another harvest, where the gods still rouse,
And stretch, and waken with the evenfall.
Down from the hill the slow white oxen crawl,
Dragging the purple waggon heaped with must,
Raising on sundered hoofs small puffs of dust,
With scarlet tassels on their milky brows,
Gentle as evening moths. Beneath the yoke
Lounging against the shaft they fitful strain
To draw the waggon on its creaking spoke,
And all the vineyard folk
With staves and shouldered tools surround the wain.
The wooden shovels take the purple stain,
The dusk is heavy with the wine's warm load ;
Here the long sense of classic measure cures
The spirit weary of its difficult pain ;
Here the old Bacchic piety endures,
Here the sweet legends of the world remain.
Homeric waggons lumbering the road ;
Virgilian litanies among the bine ;
Pastoral sloth of flocks beneath the pine ;
The swineherd watching, propped upon his goad,
Under the chestnut trees the rootling swine.
Who could so stand, and see this evening fall,
This calm of husbandry, this redolent tilth,
This terracing of hills, this vintage wealth,
Without the pagan sanity of blood

Mounting his veins in young and tempered health ?
Who could so stand, and watch processional
The vintners, herds, and flocks in dusty train
Wend through the molten evening to regain
The terraced farm and trodden threshing-floor
Where late the flail
Tossed high the maize in scud of gritty ore,
And lies half-buried in the heap of grain,—
Who could so watch, and not forget the rack
Of wills worn thin and thought become too frail,
Nor roll the centuries back
And feel the sinews of his soul grow hale,
Knowing himself for Rome's inheritor ?

O Mantuan ! that sang the bees and vines,
The tillage and the flocks,
I saw the round moon rise above the pines,
One quiet planet prick the greening west,
As goats came leaping up the stony crest
And the crook'd goatherd moved between the rocks.
That moon, that star, above my English weald,
Hung at that hour, and I not there to see ;
Shining through mist above the dew-drenched field,
Making a cavern of the plummy tree.
Then all my deep acquaintance with that land,
Crying for words, welled up ; as man who knows
That Nature, tender enemy, harsh friend,
Takes from him soon the little that she gave,
Yet for his span will labour to defend
His courage, that his soul be not a slave,
Whether on waxen tablet or on loam,

Whether with stylus or with share and heft
The record of his passage he engrave,
And still, in toil, takes heart to love the rose.

Then thought I, Virgil ! how from Mantua reft,
Shy as a peasant in the courts of Rome,
You took the waxen tablets in your hand,
And out of anger cut calm tales of home.

From *The Land.*

